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SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, MAY 15, 1896.

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SOME PROBLEMS ABOUT TO CONFRONT ASTRONOMERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Members of the New York Academy of Sciences, Ladies and Gentlemen: The nineteenth century has shown vigorous development in all branches of science, and in none more than in astronomy. The effective work of numerous observers and mathematicians has lifted us to greater heights of knowledge, making visible and clear many things previously discerned dimly. But the elevation has also extended our horizon, and the boundaries of knowledge appear 'infinitely infinite.' This evening I shall not make any attempt to sketch the details, or even the general features of the view before us, as we stand at the end of the century, looking down from the elevated position the scientific workers in astronomy enable us to occupy. I shall content myself with a much narrower survey, selecting here and there some especial part of the field before us, with the desire of stating briefly what has been done in that field and in what condition it now stands.

From the point of view of the practical astronomer the stars are so many signal lights marking the 'milestones on the great celestial highway traversed by the planets, as well as on the byways of space occasionally pursued by comets.' If we desire to know the position of a planet or a comet on

*Address of the retiring President of the New York Academy of Sciences, March 30, 1896.